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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [UNSC](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [LE](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: YET ANOTHER ATTEMPT AT CHRISTIAN
RECONCILIATION

REF: A. 08 BEIRUT 1406
[1](#)B. 08 BEIRUT 1637

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

[1](#)1. (C) March 14 (Kataeb) MP Sami Gemayel and opposition-aligned MP Suleiman Franjieh initiated yet another attempt at Christian reconciliation with a July 29 luncheon. Gemayel (Amine's son) reportedly hopes to engineer reconciliation between Franjieh and Patriarch Sfeir, who have been at odds since Franjieh accused Sfeir of meddling in politics. Gemayel's eventual goal is reconcile Franjieh with Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea, whom Franjieh blames for the murder of his parents and sister during the civil war. Franjieh is unlikely to bring his ally, Free Patriotic Movement leader Michel Aoun, into the reconciliation efforts. For this reason, and because this is far from the first attempt at Christian reconciliation, most observers do not believe the latest round will amount to anything. End summary and comment.

GEMAYEL, FRANJIEH FIND
COMMON GROUND

[1](#)2. (C) "Sami Gemayel is serious about Christian reconciliation, but does not hold false illusions," Jean Pierre Katrib, advisor to Kataeb MP Sami Gemayel told PolOff on July 29. Katrib said the July 26 "reconciliation" lunch between the Gemayels (Sami and his father, former President Amine Gemayel) and opposition-aligned MP Suleiman Franjieh was a follow-up to Sami's meeting in early July with Franjieh, and would not be the last meeting.

[1](#)3. (C) Sami Gemayel and Franjieh reportedly disagreed on the role of Hizballah's weapons and the blocking third concept for cabinet formulation while finding common ground on the need for government decentralization and opposition to Palestinian naturalization. (Note: Franjieh and his ally, Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) leader Michel Aoun, frequently accuse March 14 Christians of advocating for naturalization

of the Palestinians currently living in Lebanon, by way of drumming up opposition to March 14; however, no one in March 14 supports naturalization. End note.)

RECONCILIATION TO INCLUDE
PATRIARCH AND GEAGEA

14. (C) According to Katrib, Franjieh offered to mediate between Gemayel and Aoun, an offer Gemayel declined in part because he has his own interlocutors within the FPM (MP Alain Aoun). For his part, Gemayel is reportedly intent on reconciling Franjieh (but not Aoun) with Patriarch Sfeir (reftels). (Note: Katrib said the last time Gemayel met Aoun was November 2007, and ultimately was "burned" by Aoun purportedly because Aoun acted under Syrian orders and pulled out of talks. End note.) Following Gemayel's July 29 meeting at the Patriarch's summer residence, Sfeir stated publicly that his doors were open to all, including Franjieh.

15. (C) Franjieh, who holds Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea responsible for killing his parents and sister in 1978 when Geagea was a Kataeb member, is willing to meet Geagea, Katrib added. Geagea stated publicly on July 29 that he was ready to meet Franjieh. (Note: In an earlier attempt at Christian reconciliation, Geagea apologized to Franjieh in September 2008, to which Franjieh responded, "A leopard cannot change its spots" (ref A). End note.)

AOUN THE STUMBLING BLOCK

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16. (C) Despite the extensive media coverage on intra-Christian reconciliation throughout the week, most observers voice skepticism that this latest attempt will lead to anything more than rhetoric. The Patriarch, the Maronite League, and even President Sleiman have all dabbled in Christian reconciliation over the last two years without success (reftels).

17. (C) Any substantive effort to truly bring about reconciliation requires the participation of Aoun, the Christian leader with the largest support base. Katrib indicated that Gemayel's focus was not on Aoun, which could mean that Gemayel realizes the futility of reconciling with Aoun at this point and is attempting to split Franjieh from Aoun. Based on Aoun's alleged fealty to Syria, his inclusion may need to wait until he receives the green light from Damascus.

COMMENT

18. (C) We previously reported that the September 2008 round of reconciliation attempts occurred in the wake of Druze/Sunni reconciliation efforts with Hizballah (ref A). Similarly, recent overtures between Druze leader Walid Jumblatt and Hizballah could play a role in prompting Christian to reconsider reconciliation as they feel threatened by improved relations between the Muslims and Druze. End comment.

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